

French Government. He was to dwell upon the natural and unchangeable friendship which ought to prevail between the two countries; but he was, at the same time, to emphasize the fact that this friendship had been seriously imperiled by the acquisition by France of New Orleans—"the one single spot on the globe the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy." Spain, Jefferson continued, might have held it forever, unmolested by the United States; but France was too dangerous a neighbor, because too powerful and restless. Proceeding from this statement of facts, Jefferson did not scruple to avail himself of the precarious state of the foreign relations of France. "The day that France takes possession of New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low-water mark. It seals the union of two nations who in conjunction can maintain exclusive possession of the ocean. From that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation." He intimated, however, the possibility of a compromise by which France might retain the whole Louisiana Territory while ceding to the United States the island of New Orleans and the Floridas; but even this he feared would be but a "temporary palliation." He expected that the reduction of Santo Domingo, then in fierce revolt under Toussaint L'Ouverture against the rule of Bonaparte, would be no short work, and that Livingston would have "time to return again and again to the charge."

This letter moved Livingston to the utmost exertion. He had found all the prominent circles of France hostile to his country—the result of Talleyrand's spite—and, what more nearly concerned his task, he had found the colonization of the Louisiana Territory a favorite scheme of Bonaparte, for reasons both of profit and of sentiment. At first, therefore, he made but little progress in his negotiation. A second communication from Jefferson, in October, brought no definite instructions to aid him, but merely expressed extreme suspicion of France and enjoined upon the Minister the utmost caution.

A month later an event occurred which brought before the public that which, had hitherto engaged the thoughts of the